

A DOCUMENT ON AGRARIAN STRUCTURE IN A VILLAGE IN  
ROHTAK DISTRICT  
(1826-27)

Durgaprasad Bhattacharya

and

Rama Deb Roy (Malakar)

1. Introductory

1.1 Thana Kalan (spelt as Kallaun in the document) a village in Rohtak district in the Punjab, contained in 1826-27 an area of 4 square miles or 2,713 acres with 351 families and a population of 1,770. In 1961, the village contained an area of 4.07 square miles, a population of 2,526 in 376 houses.

1.2 This village was surveyed by Captain Oliver in 1824. In 1826-27, a statistical enquiry with an investigation into land tenure was conducted by G. B. Campbell for the purpose of assessment. It appears that the enquiries were conducted according to the Bengal Regulation VII of 1822 and subsequent instructions contained in celebrated Mackenzie Memorandum of 19th October, 1826.

1.3 The full document of the village enquiry was forwarded by G. B. Campbell, Principal Assistant, Rohtak Division, in a letter dated Goorgaon Camp, the 20th November, 1827 to the Acting Secretary to the Commissioner at Delhi. The report, in turn, was forwarded to the Acting Secretary to the Government at Fort William in the Territorial Department. The set of documents and letters was contained in *Bengal Territorial Revenue Proceedings* of 3rd January, 1828, No. 53, 54 and 55 preserved at the West Bengal Archives.

1.4 The document prepared by Campwell is of considerable interest. Firstly, the principles on which the village was settled was stated to be in existence since the days of Ally Murdan Khan roughly in 1640's; secondly, the statistical enquiry resembles, on the one hand, the village statistical system, described in *Kautilya's Arthashastra* to some extent; on the other, the one now being attempted in the country for planning purposes; thirdly, it gives a picture of agrarian relations (relations of production among the people formed on the basis of ownership of the means of production commonly called a 'structure', and of socio-economic conditions indicating a corresponding 'superstructure'.

1.5 The document traces the origin of the village and contains data on rights and classification of the occupants of the soil, classification of lands according to soil type and use, the principles and rates of assessment, allowance to village servants and conditions of people. The statistical tables contain data on area, soil type, land use, irrigation with sources, implements of husbandry and cattle, population, occupation with ranking of social classes, crops, quantity and value of production, a detailed statement of cost of agricultural operation per plough.

## 2. Pattern of Land Ownership

2.1 The village originally peopled in the closing years of the first quarter of the seventeenth century from a person of Dhee Gote or milkman tribe. It was divided into four parts or Pannas when inherited by four sons after the death of the founder. It seems to represent a typical village where there is no zemindar as well as slaves. Land was held by four classes: (i) *Biswehdars* or virtual owners of the soil, (ii) *Bhoombaees* or brothers of the soil, (iii) Ejectable tenants, and (iv) Mortgage holders.

2.2 The *Biswehdars* consist of 118 Jats direct descendents of the original stock, in whom "is solely vested an universally acknowledged hereditary, indefeasible right property in the soil" and "who possess.. the privilege of conveying or transfassing that right to the hereditary parcelor parcels of land that have been descended in them in patrimony from generation to generation".

2.3 The *Bhoombae's* right in land was derived either from long actual possession or from hereditary occupancy. They were not subject to ejection by the *Biswehdars* so long as they paid their quota of assessed jumma. It appears that they belonged to various tribes of Jats.

2.4 Ejectable tenants are those "who have been settled in the village and cultivated the parcels of land now held by them for various periods of time from 1 to 25 years advancing no claim to a right of property and many of them not even to a right of occupancy therein". Though they are ejectable at the pleasure of the *Biswehdars*, they hardly suffered any ejection so long as they paid their dues. From a list of 49 such tenants contained in the document, it appears that 15 of them were Brahmins, 18 were Jats of different Gotes or tribes, and the remaining consisted of village artisans including one *bunya*.

2.5 "Persons who held lands in mortgage and who claim no property nor interest in the soil beyond the terms or sums of money stipulated for" were in the temporary possession of parcels of land. From a table contained in the document, it appears that a parcel of land continued to be in the possession of a mortgage holder sometimes more than 20 years for a sum of Rs. 17 or Rs. 22.

## 3. Land Utilisation Pattern

3.1 The village, as stated earlier, was divided into 4 pannas or parts, namely, Chandeen, Bungeean, Bugree, Pachee, nominally equal in size, indistinct from one another by local position or dividing roads or defined limits. For administrative purposes, however, each part had a separate "economy of societies", one managing head, one separate set of village servants. Each panna or part was supposed to contribute to one-fourth of the aggregate jumma. As ascertained by Campbell through statistical enquiries, measurement and values recorded by *Putwaree* was in variation with those of his survey to some extent.

3.2 The land was classified by use-type as given in the following table:

TABLE 1. *Area of Land by Use-type (1.6 bigha is equal to one acre).*

Serial No.	Land by Use-type	quantity in standard bigha
1	<i>Abadee</i> . . . . .	29
2	<i>Ghorah</i> . . . . .	38
3	<i>Jageer &amp; Khairat</i> . . . . .	36
4	<i>Malgoozari</i> :	
	Cultivated . . . . .	2,461
	Culturable . . . . .	697
5	Forest & Jungle . . . . .	922
6	Barren . . . . .	158
Total . . . . .		4,341

*Abadee* included village sites commonly held by 4 pannas. *Gorah* formed a common thoroughfare and grazing grounds held separately by each panna.

*Jagir and Khairat* contained land granted for services free of rent.

*Malgoozari* implied land subject to assessment of revenue. Forest and jungle was appropriated for pasturage held commonly by 4 pannas. Barren land consisted of beds of tanks, roads wells, banks of canal and other water sources.

#### 4. Campbell's Settlement of 1826-27

4.1. The principles of settlement were supposed to be assameewar or ryotwar . . . "with the whole body of the *Biswehdars*, land owners or lenial descendants of the original stock . . . as well as with the whole class of *Bhoombaees* or non-ejectable hereditary occupants, *puttas* or leases having been delivered directly to each, specifying the extent of his field or fields, the amount of the annual government rent assessed thereupon, the rate of such assessment per Bigha and lastly the amount of, and date upon which each instalment falls due".

4.2 *Puttas* or Deeds of Lease were granted individually to all *Biswehdars* and *Bhoombaees* separately. *Puttas* were granted to each of the *Moguddums* of four Pannas. A *Kabooleut* or deed of agreement has been "entered into by the *Moguddums* or managing heads of each Panna binding themselves individually and collectively as agents on the part and in behalf of the whole body of the *Biswehdars* and other occupants, . . ."

4.3 No deed of lease was, however, granted to non-occupancy ejectable tenants, as according to Campbell, granting of such leases indiscriminately and directly caused "injury" and "destruction" to the property

right of *Biswehdars*. For parcels of land cultivated by ejectable tenants and mortgage holders, *puttas* were delivered to the real landowners, simultaneously furnishing authenticated copies of leases to the former categories of non-occupancy tenants.

4.4 The total assessment of revenue decreased by Rs. 1147 to Rs. 5453. The Commissioner at Delhi wrote to Fort William in support of Campbell to say "that the former *Jumma* was over rated and that the proposed *Jumma* is as high on the capabilities of the Estate will warrant". It is worth while to note the rate of assessment which varied according to types of soil. The following table shows the soil type and rate of assessment.

TABLE 2. *Types of Land and Rates of Assessment.*

Types of land	land (in bigha)	rates per bigha in		Total
		Rs.	As.	Rs.
1	2	3		4
Irrigated land :				
(i) from pucca wells	12	3- 0		34
(ii) from kuchha wells	71	2- 0		143
(iii) from canals	1,293	2- 0		2,748
strong loam	274	1- 8		410
sandy loam	618	1- 8		927
Bhoor or light sand	193	- 12		145
culturable land	697	1- 8		1,046
				} sic
	3,158			5,453

## 5. Socio-economic Conditions

5.1 The agrarian relations or the structure almost pre-determined the division of the population into socio-economic classes. To illustrate, the *Biswehdars* consisting of jats of various tribes were land owners with permanent, hereditary, transferrable rights. The *Bhoombaees* were all of Jat tribe having permanent and hereditary occupancy right. Even 70 per cent of ejectable tenants belonged to Jat tribes, the rest 30 per cent consisting of barbers, carpenters, oilman, chamar, banya and potter. The last group, the mortgage holders, was of mixed population. To summarise, land ownership including permanent tenancy was virtually confined to 52 per cent of the population, the *Biswehdars* alone owing 38 per cent. Campbell ranked the population into three groups—wealthy, comfortable and poor as shown in the table below.

TABLE 3. *Percentage Distribution of Population according to Socio-Economic Rank*

Occupation	Wealthy	Comfor table	Poor
1	2	3	4
Biswehdars . . . . .	56.5	64.7	7.2
Hereditary . . . . .	24.7	15.2	5.1
Cultivators . . . . .	..	..	0.6
New Settlers . . . . .			
Total agricultural (excluding labourers some of whom were likely to be engaged also in agriculture) . . . . .	81.2	79.9	12.9
Manufacturers . . . . .	6.5	9.2	9.3
Traders . . . . .	12.3	10.9	4.3
Labourers . . . . .	..	..	18.9
Other Classes . . . . .	..	..	54.6
Total non-agricultural . . . . .	18.8	20.1	87.1
Total . . . . .	100.00	100.00	100.00

5.2 It shows that 81 per cent of 'wealthy' and 82 per cent of 'comfortable' belonged to land owners and hereditary cultivators, the *Biswehdars* being more formidable; on the other hand, 87 per cent of 'poor' belonged to non-agricultural classes, here the formidable group being 'other classes' presumably consisting of lower casts pursuing low-status occupation. Among the non-agricultural groups, manufacturers and traders were a bit better. To sum up, caste, rights in land and economic status made a parallel existence in a classed society.

5.3 Campbell presented a number of statistical tables seemingly of reasonable reliability so far can be judged from their internal consistencies. A table has been appended to show the total production of crops and their value. He enumerated 9 *Khureef* and 10 *Rubee* crops, presented data on the lowest and average produce per bigha, as well as on the highest, lowest and average prices of each for last 10 years, and finally computed quantities and value of *Khureef* and *Rubee* crops (also straw). Gross produce of grain thus estimated came to 13,192 maunds valued at Rs. 16,419 (including value of straw). It shows a per capita availability of grain at 9 maunds per annum valued at Rs. 9 or Rs. 9.25.

5.4 He has also presented an excellent table of produce and charges of cultivation capable of being performed with one plough according to local information. One plough is supposed to cultivate 12 bighas of *Khureef* (7½ acres) and 8 bighas (5 acres) of *Rubee* crop making a total

of 20 bighas (12½ acres). In calculating the cost, purchase value of each implement of husbandry and of cattle was given with expected life and thus placing annual depreciation as an input cost. For a total production value of Rs. 16,419, cost of production was estimated at Rs. 5,932 (36.8 per cent), government share at Rs. 5,473 at one-third and thus, share to cultivator at Rs. 5,014.

5.5 Assuming that per capita gross agricultural produce is equivalent to per capita income (the deduction for netting being assumed as equal to non-agricultural income), the per capita annual income comes to Rs. 9.28 in 1826-27. In terms of wheat, per capita income per month was 30 seers and per annum 360 seers. At 1977 prices @ Rs. 1.50 per seer, income per month comes to Rs. 45 (or Rs. 540 per annum).

5.6 The *Putwari* was paid Rs. 47.25 per annum, and the *Chowkidar* Rs. 42 in 1926-27. Each of the Carpenter and the Blacksmith received a wage of ½ rupee per plough per annum (or 24 seers of grain). It means an annual income of about Rs. 75. In 1977 wheat prices, it is equivalent to Rs. 3600 or Rs. 300 per month. An ordinary *Halee* or sowing hand used to get a wage of 45 seers of grain per month to remain engaged for one plough for 4 months.

5.7 The document is one of thousands of illuminated pieces of records that throw a flood of light on socio-economic conditions of our recent past. Such documents should be systematically searched and used with a view to providing materials for a real history of the people of India to reveal how they lived and worked in different ages.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

TABLE I. *Village Statistics of Thanah Kallan, Rohtak District, 1826-27*

1. area (in acres)	2,713
,, (in sq. mile)	4
2. houses, mud/chapra	331
,, masonry	20
total	351
3. population	1,770
,, per house	53
,, per sq. mile	443
4. land use (in acres)	
uncultivated (pasturage for cattle being common land for 4 divisions or pannas constitutes 'forests & jungles')	599
forest and jungle barren ('barren' consists of beds of tanks, roads, wells, Tanks of canal)	141
arable	436
cultivated	1,537
irrigated	853*
	(*irrigated area thus constituted 55.5 per cent of cropped area).
5. stock	
drought cattle	313
grazing cattle	798
sheep and goats	256
horse and camel	19
6. dead stock	
plough	153
hoe	1,966
hackery	48
pucca well	6
kuchha well	16



TABLE II. *Distribution of Population by Occupation and Socio-Economic Status in Thanah Kalan, 1826-27*

Occupation groups	No. of houses	Population				Percentage to total
		Wealthy	Comfort	Poor	Total	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Biswadars . . . . .	130	312	310	53	675	38.1
Hereditary cultivators . . . . .	43	136	73	38	247	14.0
New settlers . . . . .	1	—	—	4	4	0.2
Total Agricultural . . . . .	174	448	383	95	926	52.3
Manufactures . . . . .	28	36	44	69	149	8.4
Traders . . . . .	29	68	52	32	152	8.6
Labourers . . . . .	32	—	—	140	140	7.9
Other classes . . . . .	88	—	—	405	403	22.8
Total Non-agricultural . . . . .	177	104	96	644	844	47.7
Grand Total . . . . .	351	552	479	739	1,770	100.0

TABLE III. *Agricultural Production of the Village Thanah Kalan, 1826-27*

Crop season	Land under cultivation in acres	Gross produce (mds)		value (Rs.)		Value total (Rs.)	Charges (Rs.)		
		Grain	Straw	Grain	Straw		Cost of production	Govt. share @ 1/3	Share to cultivator
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Khureef . . . . .	869	5,913	7,503	7,404	670	8,074	2,686	2,691	2,697
Rubee . . . . .	668	7,279	7,134	7,238	1,087	8,345	3,246	2,782	2,317
Total . . . . .	1,537	13,192	14,637	14,662	1,757	16,419	5,932	5,473	5,014